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Approved For Release 2003/02/27 : CIA-RDP79T00975A005000310001-1

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/02/27 : CIA-RDP79T00975A005000310001-1

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DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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*Israel-USSR: Prime Minister Ben-Gurion has proposed to the USSR that he be invited to visit Moscow. The Soviet chargé in Tel Aviv said his government is considering the proposal but gave no indication of whether or not it would be favorably received. Ben-Gurion wants to continue his personal presentations of Israel's views to big-power leaders before the summit meeting. While Israel announced on 2 April that he had received an invitation for an official visit to Paris, the French have been cool toward a De Gaulle - Ben-Gurion meeting, and it probably will not take place before the summit.]

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Yemen: Yemeni officials appear increasingly concerned over what they feel is an inadequate American response to Yemen's requests for economic assistance. They claim that the Imam has decided to adopt a "pro-Western" policy and urge a prompt American effort to take advantage of the opportunity this offers. The American Legation in Taiz, meanwhile, reports that the Russians and Chinese Communists have stepped up work on the aid projects they have undertaken. [redacted]

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Japan - South Korea: Japanese - South Korean negotiations, which will be resumed on 15 April, appear to offer only limited prospects for an over-all settlement. It is unlikely that President Rhee will ever agree to reasonable terms on such major issues as the Rhee line and South Korean property and reparations claims. [redacted]

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III. THE WEST

France-Tunisia: France has resumed negotiations with Tunisia on the future status of the Bizerte base, and is prepared to begin evacuating French military forces from the town of Bizerte and bring outlying forces into the base proper. [redacted]

President Bourguiba may consider the French proposal an adequate interim formula to save face over his failure to acquire by his own 8 February deadline a French commitment to evacuate the Bizerte base. He nevertheless will continue to press for total evacuation. [redacted] (Page 6)

25X1

5 Apr 60

ii

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/02/27 : CIA-RDP79T00975A005000310001-1

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/02/27 : CIA-RDP79T00975A005000310001-1

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion Proposes Visit to Moscow

[The Soviet chargé d'affairs in Tel Aviv has confirmed to American Embassy officials that Prime Minister Ben-Gurion proposes to visit the USSR. An Israeli newspaper has reported that Ben-Gurion has not, however, insisted upon a formal invitation and would accept the "consent" of the Soviet Union.]

[The Soviet chargé on 31 March said his government was considering the proposal, but gave no indication of Moscow's response. The proposed trip poses a dilemma to Soviet leaders. A visit by the Israeli leader would tend to undercut Moscow's efforts to foster an image of the Soviet Union as the big-power supporter of the Arab countries against an allegedly expansionist-minded Israel. A refusal, on the other hand, would show that Moscow favors contacts at the head-of-government level only when it feels that such contacts are in accord with Soviet policy objectives.]

[Ben-Gurion presumably intends to present Israel's views on Middle East issues to the Soviet Government in case the East-West summit conference should discuss problems in that area. Israel reportedly desires a declaration by the four big powers that would guarantee the territorial status quo in the Middle East and would encourage an Arab-Israeli settlement. Prospects for obtaining such a resolution, however, seem remote. Britain, France, and the US joined in a tripartite declaration in 1950 which undertook to guarantee existing Middle Eastern frontiers.]

[Ben-Gurion has seen Macmillan and Adenauer in addition to President Eisenhower in recent weeks, and, according to an Israeli announcement, now has been invited to make an official visit to France. The French had been cool, however, to a suggested De Gaulle - Ben-Gurion meeting, and the visit will probably not take place before the summit meeting. De Gaulle has sought to disengage France from its close relationship with Israel in the interest of better relations with the Arab states, with the immediate aim of facilitating a settlement in Algeria. New French-UAR talks are said to be in progress in Paris.]

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Yemeni Officials Anxious Over American Aid

The American chargé in Taiz has recently reported growing doubt among local officials as to the genuineness of American interest in furnishing economic aid to Yemen. The chargé also noted that Yemeni opinion on the Communist bloc aid efforts there appears to be increasingly favorable.

Late last year, Yemeni officials began urging fast American action to take advantage of Yemen's "rising good will" toward the West and the Imam's reported decision to adopt a "pro-Western" policy. At that time, the Imam was reported to be deeply suspicious of Communist intentions in Yemen, and this report appeared to be borne out by the fact that no new aid agreement was announced following Yemeni negotiations with Moscow last November.

A basic aid agreement with the United States was signed during the same period. A total of \$2,000,000 in American aid funds has been proposed for Yemen during fiscal 1961. The major project under the US-Yemen agreement--a highway to be constructed between Taiz and Sana--is now being negotiated. Yemeni officials contend that the planned construction period of "three to four years" must be shortened to avoid unfavorable comparisons with the Chinese Communist Hudayda-Sana road project and to illustrate the United States' "real sincerity and esteem regarding Yemen."

While Moscow did not offer any new economic credits to Yemen during the visit of the Imam's brother in November 1959, the USSR did agree to undertake additional projects within the scope of the original \$25,000,000 line of credit. Since then, presumably with increased Yemeni cooperation, the USSR appears to have been able to speed up work on such projects as the port at Hudayda. In addition, activity under the Soviet military aid program seems to have been renewed. At the same time, Communist China--under its \$16,000,000 interest-free credit--is reportedly overcoming obstacles initially encountered in the construction of the Hudayda-Sana road.

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Japan and South Korea to Renew Efforts for Over-all Settlement

Japanese - South Korean negotiations for a settlement of outstanding issues are to be resumed on 15 April in the more relaxed atmosphere created by the now almost completed exchange of detainees. Prospects for substantive agreement, however, are still remote.

The negotiations are expected to resume the familiar pattern of subcommittee discussions on fisheries, property claims, and the return of art objects taken by the Japanese during their occupation of Korea. Indications are that difficulties will be encountered even prior to this stage over expected Japanese requests for the release of 47 additional captured fishermen when they complete their sentences for violating the "Rhee line." Furthermore, Tokyo's efforts to gain diplomatic representation in Seoul, in reciprocity for the long-established South Korean mission in Tokyo, almost certainly will meet with opposition from President Rhee, who has refused to allow any Japanese to set foot in the country.

The relaxation of tensions between the countries is also evident in the 4 April announcement that full-scale trade will be resumed. Trade suspension, however, has proved more damaging to South Korea than to Japan, [and Seoul's agreement to the detainee exchange apparently stemmed primarily from strong American representations and from a desire to reduce pressures in Japan for strong action against South Korea's "hostage diplomacy."]

25X1

There is no indication whatever that President Rhee will relax his ban against Japanese fishing inside the "Rhee line" nor that Tokyo will recognize the line as a valid international demarcation. Meanwhile, Japanese violations of the line probably will continue to a limited extent, creating the possibility of future incidents and seizures as well as the renewal of pressures in Japan for a harsher policy toward South Korea.

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New French Proposals on Bizerte

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[The French chargé in Tunis has resumed talks with Tunisian officials on the future status of the Bizerte base. The chargé informed the Tunisians on 31 March that France has decided "as a unilateral action and a major concession" to withdraw all French forces from the town of Bizerte and to pull small outlying units back into the main base. This action is scheduled to begin "in the coming days and be completed in several months."]

[He said Paris also is willing to demilitarize the French naval arsenal and shipyard on Bizerte Lake and transform these installations into a joint Franco-Tunisian industrial enterprise, and is prepared to agree that the use of the Bizerte base will be limited substantially to naval and air forces. These arrangements would include a guarantee that the base would not be involved in the Algerian war. About 75 percent of the 10,000 French military personnel now stationed at the Bizerte base are naval forces, and approximately 4,000 French civilians are employed at the shipyard.]

[French withdrawal inside the Bizerte base perimeter should provide President Bourguiba with an adequate "face-saving" formula to avoid reviving the evacuation issue which he forced early this year. It should also add a hopeful note to the discussion of Tunisian-French relations with which he is committed to open the Tunisian National Assembly on 7 April. Anticipating this speech, Bourguiba made both friendly and critical remarks about France on 1 April to the Tunisian labor congress. He, nevertheless, will continue to pursue his policy of demanding a French commitment for eventual evacuation of the Bizerte base.]

[Paris probably fears that any commitment to withdraw French forces from Tunisia would increase the already intensive pressure from Morocco for a French commitment to evacuate French bases there. In view of the present forecast of a long continuation of the Algerian war, France is unlikely to make such concessions voluntarily.]

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